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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "octG2013" (2013). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 121.
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Bard

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The famous forgotten
what is that tree
she wanted to know
its leaves are hearts
and there are ready processes
hanging down towards the stream

the rapids, the counting numbers,
the mildewed pages of those books
you had with you in Africa

where words mean different things
from what they mean
among the dispersed children we are—
you were in the first country
there in the first country
where touching is the first knowing

Linden, I guessed,
American basswood, two years
ago my house was fragrant from one

and the bees, the bees.
You had to read at night
by a paraffin lamp at cot-side

but what can reading mean
in such a place where
every book is portentous as the Bible —

enough that you came home.
You have been to the empty theater
where life first ran,
you have been to the beginning
and now you come
to this old place for the first time.
How can I look you in the eye?

20 October 2013

= = = = =

**ndifferent carapaces
and flightless insects**

**others walk the air
these stay here**

**my mind the carapace
keeps the world off**

**what is it really
like out there?**

20 October 2013

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**I can't help making sense
it's the fault of language**

**you can say your way into thinking
and then you're stuck with what you thought.**

**If you got that far.
It could be a green car
idling in the parking lot
till it runs out of gas.**

**It needs your help —
not every word can get there
by itself.**

Some can.

And carry me with them all the way.

20 October 2013

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**Cursory glances
marry the brunette**

**the dogs of Jericho
remember an army**

**the walls fell down
the people stood**

just give me something to eat.

20 October 2013

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Resemblance

of waking persons to animates

spotted in dream begets

lawsuits or at least responsa

from the religious court

the so-called Can of Worms—

I never saw her in my life

your honor, it was just

a pale face in an ogival

hood such as novice nuns

might wear, training wimples.

I don't even know if she was beautiful

before she vanished into daylight.

Wherefore I bring this suit against the sun —

adducing evidence: the empty garden,

my bleary eyes, a hole in the heart.

Or take the last one out —

I know the law is impatient with metaphor.

21 October 2013

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It's hard to scream neatly onto paper.

A reckless recluse

sobbing at the door of his den.

His idea. Must leave again

to speak among those others

of whom he would rather dream

apart, half-omnipotent,

safe from all but his desires —

to strive with them in silence

and far away. Don't make me cry.

21 October 2013

=====

**A twitch in the ring finger
like a gnat landing.**

**No ring on that finger.
Tells me not what is coming**

**but that someone is.
Wake the clock up.**

**Open the door and salute the crows.
We're on the verge of day,**

a thing that has never happened before.

21 October 2013

TREATISE ON EDUCATION

**How oft the bush
supposed bare
now a scant month
back was prim
with roses tinted
like a child's smile
or cloudy sunset.**

**This isn't right. The words
are right, I make them wrong.**

**We live in a cartoon,
a malaprop university
where we pay to unlearn
the simple thing we know.**

1.

**Spectacular dogs
will distract us from
the owners' imperfections.
Walk an eight-foot hound they'll
never noticed the acne on your cheek,
your sly self-conscious treasonable eyes.**

**Education is distraction,
anodyne, anal
as in analgesic and amassing —
false analysis, lysis,**

**imagine though a learning
that is tested
not in examinations
but by experience.
Imagine a language you learn
by speaking it, hearing it, living in it.**

**The best schoolroom is an empty closet
you're locked in, now what you do?**

Know your way out.

**Go into the closet and pray to your father,
he said, to whoever made your mind.**

**Who made you, little man?
Who made the dog you carry in your arms?**

**You made yourself
now go on making.**

2.

Every system by its nature
distorts the nature
of what it proposes to arrange,
Ranger, in Krio means cast a spell

that harms or helps
the one who uses or abuses it.
Eat my *range* chicken
and you will rue the day.

3.

Imagine giving them everything all at once.
Imagine a thing like a book
full of words —

the sheep eat all at once,
the wolf eats when he can.

There is always grass, there aren't always sheep.

Imagine everything I ever knew
and give it to you.

A teacher stands under a tree
or in the living room

and talks and talks until she said it all
or as much of all as that
sunshine or rainfall holds.

They listen till they walk away,
lured by something else to think or hear or do.

4.

A school should be a zoo,
the teachers are the beasts and birds
in soft and comfy cages,

students come to watch and listen
and see what they do
until they've seen enough to know
what manner of thing that is such people do,
or as much as they can bear, or stare
at the malevolent economist
coiled in his den.

School would be a pleasure then.
Watch the writer writer, the painter paint
the history-maker
make up his lies.

Really, just watch what they do.

The first thing to learn is what to eat.

Then how to make more of that.

**Then how to write down what you learned
so that your damfool son can learn it too—**

**when that is done then take out your bone flute
or smear your monthly blood on these stone walls**

**so all that gaunt geology can come to life,
your life, and start whispering its guesswork too**

**just like you — you are part of this thing
always talking — now to listen —**

**every bird is a competent instructor.
Especially the ones like me,
the crows, the loud fat shouters in the corn
who kill nothing and eat everything.**

**Teachers used to wear a black gowns
to remind them that they're crows.
You still see them dressed that way at graduation
but devil a squawk of wisdom will you hear,**

**they talk in borrowed feathers
but have no beaks to speak
and all they ever say is yesterday.**

5.

So there is no history, right?

**No science and no government,
just a wondrous pack of lies,**

**give us a mound of glossy Legos
to build our mind,**

right?

No animating thought abides.

The spermatic logos is what you want —

desire is the one

infallible instructor,

the school you can't stop going to.

22 October 2013

1.

**I tried to speak to you
knowing the way**

**the woods
had gone their green**

**but we all could tell
even from the shadow of a stone
but not the stone
what was and will be**

**a place to hide
from what I thought**

2.

But if you thought it too
and the lame trees
were just an illustration

old children's book
we wander in

counting our breaths
to the little stream you
once saw a king
fisher catch a fish from

blue thing then silver

3.

**because children in
close to what we are
after we get over the terrible
business of growing**

**up where you can't see the trees
in all those years not
even a blade of grass
from your window**

**we wanted to lie down
in that book
and let the leaves drift through us
round us, mound
upon us till we wake up**

4.

**and that would remember us
all the verbs and vipers
creeping through the wood**

**it is not safe to dream
she might be missing when you wake**

**or might be there
unbearably beside you**

5.

**be open more if
and let space itself decide
for once
where you are**

and no more religion!

**only awe only adore
only touch each
anything skin
with the reverence it requires
let the stone tell you**

**but doesn't that sound like
god all over again?**

23 October 2013